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ABSTRACT

Intended as a guide to aid inservice teachers and school administrative personnel in developing an effective program for the utilization of school volunteers, this document discusses the merits of a volunteer program and provides concrete suggestions for program design and implementation. Five steps towards a volunteer program delineated by the document are: (1) initiating a program; (2) determining what educational needs such a program might address; (3) recruitment of volunteers; (4) orientation and training of volunteers; and (5) overall coordination and administration of the program. A model for a program operational structure and a bibliography of 16 references are appended. (LH)

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TEACHER: YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD IS A WEALTH OF HELP

Volunteers in education are becoming increasingly more prevelent as the pressures for individualizing instruction are increased Every community has many potential volunteers whose abilities can be utilized effectively by the school to meet the varied needs of children. In order for a volunteer program to be successful, there must be a cooperative effort between the volunteers who give the service and the school staff. This paper has been prepared to enable you, the teacher, to more effectively utilize the services of volunteers. Some basic facts about the use of volunteers in education is presented in the first part of this paper. Suggestions for starting off with volunteers are presented in the second part of the paper. Thirdly, a guide for developing and implementing a volunteer reading tutorial program for your class or school is described. A bibliography of books and materials is included as a supplement to this guide.

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Some Basic Facts About Volunteers

A school volunteer in education is a concerned and dedicated person who works regularly in schools to support the efforts of professional personnel. Volunteers help individual and small groups of children who need assistance and/or enrichment and aid in other areas of school operations. A volunteer always works under the direction of teachers and other personnel. Volunteers come from all backgrounds and age groups and may include parents, community members, students, business people released by their employers, and senior citizens. Both the older volunteer and the students they tutor receive valuable dividends. Senior citizens have many skills that can be shared and often enjoy the opportunity to work with children. This is a constructive way to fill time that might otherwise be spent in loneliness. In addition, older citizens who have minimal contact with schools and who may be living on a fixed retirement income, often vote against school bond issues.

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One way to win their allegiance is to enlist them as volunteers.

When the tutor is a student, he learns as much as the child that is being tutored. It is a good way for the student tutor to review and synthesize his own knowledge. All volunteers are capable of growing and learning on the job. Therefore, prospective volunteers from low socio-economic groups, should be enlisted as there is always some asset that they can share with children.

Consider the following ways in which volunteers can be of help to you:

-Provide individualization of instruction
-Increase student's motivation for learning
-Enrich student's experiences
-Relieve school personnel of many non-teaching duties and tasks
-Provide increased school-community relations through positive participation.

Volunteers can perform services in many areas. However, their volunteer activities will vary according to needs and will generally fall into one of the following categories:

-Tutoring: Provide one-to-one or small group instruction to children with exceptional talents or difficulties. For example, students with reading weaknesses, non-English speaking students, gifted and exceptional students, absentee students.
-Classroom: Under the supervision of the classroom teacher, volunteers can do reinforcement tasks.
-General Services:

Audio-visual Activities-operate audio-visual equipment and prepare audio visual aids.
Luncheon activities-assist in maintaining order and supervising activities after lunch.
Hall Patrol-assist at doors and maintain order in halls.
Library-assist librarian in shelving, filing, clipping, circulation and book processing.
Special Enrichment-share unique talents, skills, hobbies, or occupations with classes or smaller

groups. These Volunteers can be businessmen, lawyers, doctors or parents with interesting hobbies or occupations, etc.

Special Education-assist in instructional activities for an individual or small group to improve visual, motor and perceptual skills.

The kinds of services a volunteer can provide will depend upon your particular needs. If you are contemplating using the services of volunteers, focus in on the one or two areas where they are most needed. The volunteer should be given specific duties and materials and should be encouraged to maintain a professional attitude at all times. They should not divulge confidential information to which they may have access and should give their services in a consistent fashion. Parents who participate in a volunteer program in their own child's school, should not be given access to confidential files. The decision to allow parents to volunteer in their own child's classroom should be made by the principal.

Suggestions For Starting Off With Volunteers

Many people volunteer initially because of a desire to help. However, the satisfaction that the volunteer derives from the experience provides the impetus to continue. You can provide that feeling of satisfaction that is so essential to the morale of the volunteer by giving her the feeling that she is welcome and an intregal part of the school community. The following suggestions for establishing a cooperative working arrangement with your volunteers are:

-Reassure your volunteer. Volunteers, expecially in the beginning, often feel insecure as to whether they are doing the right thing for the children. Remember this may be her first working experience in a school setting and she needs frequent reassurance and support.

-Provide for frequent meetings with your volunteers to answer questions, give constructive feedback, discuss problems and to ask for suggestions.

-Encourage your volunteer by praising her and don't forget to say "thank you". A great source of satisfaction for volunteers are thank you letters from the students and from the teacher.
-Inform the volunteer of the need for her services.
-Orient the volunteer to the classroom setting, to the materials you use and to the resources available as well as to the school procedures (i.e. assemblies, firedrills, etc.).
-Give the volunteer an opportunity to tell you what her skills are and what she would like to do.
-Introduce the volunteer to the students and explain how she will help them.
-Accept each volunteer as an individual and try to establish a friendly rapport.
-Provide for formal and informal recognition activities. Recognition ceremonies and articles in community or school newspapers enhance the volunteers' feelings of worth about themselves and the job they are doing. School Volunteer Recognition Week is observed every year (usually in April) throughout the United States. Individual schools have special ceremonies and district wide recognition events. Some schools give volunteers special identification cards or badges and prepare exhibits on volunteer activities for open house events.

Setting Up A Volunteer Reading Program For Your School

A member of the school faculty should assume responsibility for organizing the program and establishing the cooperative working arrangements needed to initiate the project. The involvement of school personnel is necessary to determine where volunteers are most needed. The following plan can be used for any type of volunteer program, large or small, in the classroom or out.

Step: 1 Getting Started

The success of the program, in large part, rests on whether the volunteer program is accepted by the administration and professional staff of your school. Ask for time to speak at the next

staff conference after you have discussed the possibility of a volunteer program with your principal. It is essential to do this so any misunderstandings about the program are cleared. Many professionals are sometimes apprehensive about having volunteers working with or near them. Often teachers and paraprofessionals feel threatened by the possibility of volunteers replacing them. This is a real problem and must be dealt with before you can hope to have any success with your program.

Step: 2 Determine Needs

The needs the program must meet should be cooperatively discussed. The needs to be considered should include those of the school, teachers and students. The need that this plan is addressed to is to provide individualized help in reading. However, the basic structure for formulating a program for meeting other needs is basically the same. The involvement of key school staff and volunteer leaders in the decision making will benefit the program by establishing rapport and defining the roles of all involved as well as help to develop an effective, workable structure for the volunteer program. This will assist in the recruitment process.

Step: 3 Recruiting Volunteers

A recruitment plan can be formulated to meet the total volunteer needs of a school or for special projects during the school year. Recruitment is an ongoing process, but you might want to have a concentrated recruitment campaign lasting a week or more. For new programs, it is important to concentrate on recruiting a corps of dedicated well-trained volunteers that will become the nucleus of a successful program. During recruitment, consideration should be given to any qualifications or requirements imposed by your particular city school system and school district. Generally, the requirements are minimal and usually deal with health, time commitments and attitude toward volunteer service. In the New York City school system for example, volunteers are required to obtain certification that they are free of TB by providing proof of a

chest Xray, Tine Test Man Tu Test (Chancellor's Circular #60, 1975).

The following are some suggestions for identifying and recruiting volunteers:

-Speak at a Parent Association meeting. Make sure to have paper and pencil handy for names, addresses and telephone numbers.

-Send flyers home with students. You can enlist your fellow teachers to take one minute before distributing the flyers to their classes to explain the importance of the program to the students and to urge them to encourage their parents, grandparents, etc. to "sign up."

-Prepare posters. Posters can be made asking for volunteers (perhaps by students themselves) and placed near entrance ways of the school and main office and in community facilities.

-Canvass the community for prospective volunteers. If there are any senior centers nearby, these can be visited. Directors of these centers are only too happy to provide facilities outside of their buildings for their groups.

-High schools and colleges can be contacted. There are many students who are interested in volunteering. Some college students have to do community work as part of their course work. Some colleges allow their students to do student teaching via tutorial programs. However, since these students are only available for one term, it is advisable to first set up the program. Arrangements with the college administration to offer school volunteerism as one of the options for student teaching or community service or life experience, is sometimes difficult to arrange but not impossible.

-Use advertisements. Ads in community newspapers and announcements in school newsletters are a good source of advertisement for volunteers.

-Booths set up at fairs, block parties and other large community activities help recruit volunteers.

Step: 4 Orientation and Training

All volunteers should have a general orientation and training

before beginning to serve in the school. This will insure that the volunteers know the objectives of the program, will thoroughly understand what their role is and will be equipped with the skills necessary to make the assignment a pleasant and personally rewarding one. The following components for inclusion in a reading tutorial program are suggested:

-Orientation to the school and to the volunteer program, Orientation acquaints the volunteer with the policies, procedures and goals of the program and the school. It is an introduction to volunteering and should give the volunteer an understanding of what her role will be. The training that follows the orientation is more specific and operational. Orientation should give the volunteer an overview of the total program, as well as general information on the group of individuals with which she will be working. It should be stressed that the volunteer must strive to create an environment which is built upon the concept of helpfulness and encouragement. She must demonstrate an attitude of confidence that the student will generally meet with success but will also have the freedom to fail safely. Orientation should take no more than one session of about two hours so the volunteer's interest does not wane before specific job assignments are made.

-The training program should not last too long and should develop concrete skills. Three sessions of about two hours each is enough. Keep the training practical and specific because volunteers do not want to hear much professional and educational jargon. Keep lecturing to a minimum and use a variety of techniques: role playing, reports, tape, buzz groups, etc. For a reading tutorial program the following breakdown is suggested: lst training, some indication of the difficulty of learning to read so the volunteer will emphathize with the student, be tolerant and have patience. Reading readiness and some discussion on child development is essential. Sight words and the word recognition skills as well as some concrete activities for helping students in

these areas should be presented. In the 2nd training session, comprehension skills can be discussed with the emphasis on reading for enjoyment. In the 3rd training session, commercial (if available) and teacher made games that help improve reading can be demonstrated. Some kind of handbook or manual with tutoring tips is helpful. There are many of these on the market. One source called, Reading Handbook For School Volunteers can be purchased through the New York City Board of Education.

The training sessions should be supplemented during the school year with workshops to provide on-going in-service training.

Step: 5 Administration of the Program

In order to insure the successful operation of the volunteer program, certain administrative functions must be performed. The principal and his staff must demonstrate their wholehearted support of the program so that the role and functions of volunteers will be understood and accepted. However, a volunteer program should not be forced onto the school staff by the principal. A genuine interest inspires greater positive response within the school than a mandate.

Since there are many responsibilities in the coordination and administration of a volunteer program, you may want to designate a responsible volunteer to act as chairperson. The chairperson working under direction can assist with the following duties:

-Keep attendance records, files and records of volunteer activities within the school.
-Process requests for volunteer services.
-Assign volunteers to specific children, teachers or activity.
-Act as a liaison between the volunteers and school staff.
-Follow up on volunteers who miss time or are unable to

fulfill a specific assignment as scheduled.

-Plan meetings so volunteers can become better acquainted with eachother and exchange ideas and seek solutions to common problems.

-Determine when workshops or in-service trainings are needed.

-Plan recognition activities for volunteers.

The key person in guiding the learning experiences of the volunteers is the teacher. The following suggestions are intended to help you in implementing the volunteer program within the limits of time available.

-Be prepared for your volunteer. Plan the work you would like her to do in advance. Be specific in your directions and avoid assigning responsibilities beyond her ability.

-Discuss the rules, regulations and procedures of the school with your volunteer. For example, fire drills, dismissal, etc. Show the volunteer around the school so she becomes familiar with the physical layout.

-Orient the volunteer to the program. Introduce her to the other volunteers and to the students that she will be working with.

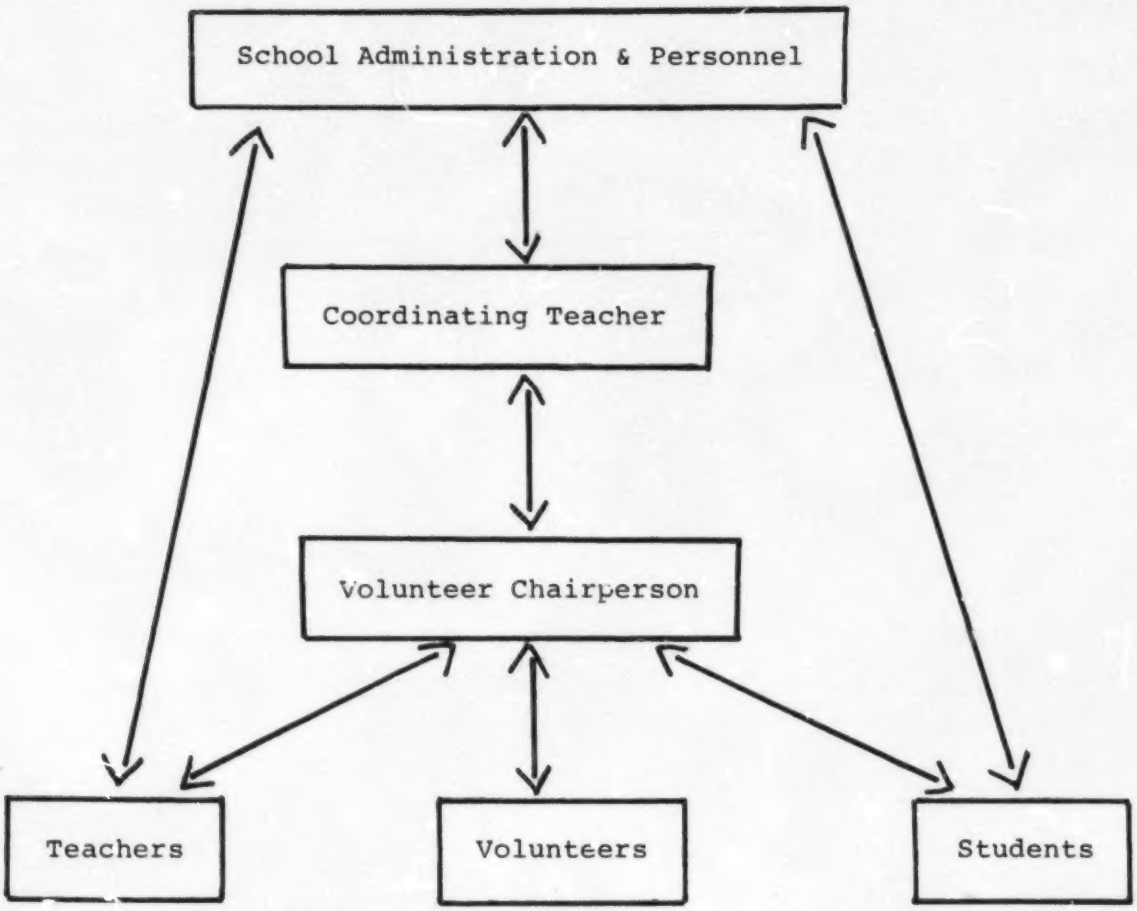
-Anticipate what information the volunteer will need to know. Show where to find materials, how to set up activities, what books and materials to use with the student, etc. Inform the volunteer of the special needs of the students she will be working with and what to expect of them.

-Arrange regular informal sessions for feedback and problem solving.

-If your volunteer is not needed at the regular time, or if the school schedule has been changed, inform the volunteer so that other arrangements can be made. This is especially important for senior citizens who may not know when the school is closed for holidays or special closings.

-Expect your volunteer to act in a professional manner, i.e., be on time, accept direction from you, stay with her assigned tasks.

A model for a school volunteer program is presented below to help you see the interrelationships between the various members of the school team and the volunteer program.



For the smooth operation of a program, procedures similar to those given below should be standardized:

-A file should be maintained for volunteers listing name, address, telephone number, person to be notified in an emergency, special skills, etc.

-The program should have a well defined starting and stopping date.

-Each volunteer program should maintain a time sheet for volunteers to sign in and out on each day of service.

-Procedures should be established for volunteers to notify someone of absences beforehand.

-At each session, volunteers should record in a log book the services performed, reactions, suggestions, problems and requests for help.

The steps outlined above represent one way of planning a program for volunteers. Some definite form of organization is necessary for the efficient and effective implementation of a volunteer program. Alternative methods may be designed and adapted to fit your special resources and availability of support. The most effective organization and planning is often that which is determined jointly by school staff and prospective volunteers.

Good luck in your volunteer program!

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